

261 benefits, and foremost among these mutual benefits is the gathering
 152 and preparation of food. For Lepchas love is never automatic;
 if they say they love a person they will always explain why they
 do so. Even with young children this attitude is firmly implanted;
 if you ask one if he loves his parents he will almost certainly reply
 'I love my father and mother because they give me my food.'
 If you ask about their feelings towards other people they have
 visited the answer again is always in terms of what they were
 given to eat. Rigya, a young man of twenty-two, said of his
 parents 'I love them both very much, but especially my mother;
 when I was young they gave me food and clothes and looked after
 me; now in my turn I must look after them.' He has been
 fairly recently married and at first he and his wife did not get on
 at all well together: 'At first we could not even look at one
 another, but now we are good friends; when I go out to work
 and come back tired my wife has food ready for me and looks
 after me; then I love her and think to myself "this is my wife",
 and I am pleased in my belly.' It may be noted that the belly is
 considered to be the seat of the emotions.

262 All ceremonial occasions among the Lepchas—birth, marriage,
 and death, religious ceremonies, exorcisms, and civil consultations
 —are marked by the consumption of extra large quantities of food
 and drink. Even the most solemn religious ceremonies are turned
 into picnics. Important past events are often remembered in terms
 of what the participants had to eat on such occasions. When I
 tried to get some of the best-adjusted Lepchas to talk about their
 own early lives they replied by giving me lists of menus.

The Lepchas are practically omnivorous; the only animals
 that they do not eat which some other races do are cats and dogs,
 rats and mice, horses and snakes. They eat all wild animals that
 they can kill or find dead, and keep and eat oxen, goats, pigs and
 hens; they also eat a great variety of wild forest produce, chiefly
 tubers of different wild yams, and various leaves which are used as
 seasoning; both meat and vegetables are supplementary dishes
 which add a relish to the cultivated cereals.

● 224 As has already been said, in former times and still today in the
 178 less fertile regions, the Lepchas relied on hunting for a great deal
 of their food; but in Lingthem and most of the other villages of
 Zongu game is hunted less and less. There are a number of reasons
 for this which interact on one another; the stigma which the Lepcha
 interpretation of lamaism places on the killing of animals excludes

GETTING FOOD

85

some of the community entirely from this pursuit, and even those who are not lamas feel a certain disinclination to killing animals. The settled houses and the greater amount of ground under cultivation and increasing domestic herds make the necessity for wild animals less urgent, and the growing commitments of agricultural life give less time for hunting. Indeed nowadays if a young man wants to go hunting (and some of the more adventurous ones do) he usually has to sneak away when his elders are not looking, and is liable to get a good scolding when he does return for withdrawing his labour from the fields; of course if the father is a hunter the son would be encouraged, but in Lingthem the only consistent hunter was Ashyok *yumi*, the most conservative man of the village who still wore the Lepcha dress and the little straw hat with a feather in it, which was once the typical Lepcha headgear, and now practically only survives as an archaic and picturesque article of dress among the servants of the Maharajah. Moreover the presence in the neighbourhood of shops where grain can be bought considerably mitigates the stress of the hungry season just before the harvest, when formerly people used to be driven into the forest for food.

When a youth, usually about the age of fifteen, wants to start hunting, it is necessary for him to acquire a bow and arrows and also to learn the requisite ritual. In most cases he cannot get either the weapons or the instruction from his father, who would be angry at the boy withdrawing his labour from the fields; the weapons he will most probably get from an elder brother or uncle or a friend, the instruction from some learned old man, probably quite unrelated. The first few times he will go on a hunting-party without weapons, but from the moment he has been on one even though he has not killed he must make the requisite sacrifices. No ceremony is connected with his first kill but he himself must not eat a piece of this kill, nor of the first hundred animals he kills with his bow (animals killed with a gun do not count; they can always be eaten). Were he to eat the first hundred animals he would develop sores and leprosy; but after he has killed this number a hollow will develop in his shoulder blade and after that he can eat with safety. The earlier animals he takes home to his family who eat them, giving him some domestic food instead. The commonest game animals are various sorts of deer; when bears are trapped their flesh is eaten, but they are seldom caught nowadays; one reason is that sexual abstinence for three months after setting a trap is imposed on bear hunters (there is no similar abstinence for the hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from the trap unhurt.

- 224 hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from their trap unharmed. Bear skins and also their gall bladders which are much sought after by the Chinese as aphrodisiacs (they fetch Rs. 5 apiece in Kalimpong) were an inducement to catch these animals when money was not plentiful or non-existent; nowadays with money from cardamum there is less economic justification for taking the risks involved. Catching small birds in snares does not count as hunting; it is one of the commonest pursuits of boys after the age of about eight, who take their catches home as presents for their mother.

ii

- 241 The agricultural land in Zongu can be divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation, and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight years. The permanent cultivation is of three types; there is the *sing* or field-garden against the house, cardamum fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now of very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern: cardamum was introduced at the beginning of the century, rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago. Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamum fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire, as it were, a capital value; this is less true of cardamum, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces; to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour.

- 461 Until the beginning of this century the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the proportion of able-bodied adults to dependants—children and the old and invalid—; if there was more than one dependent to one able-bodied adult life was liable to be rather hard. Nowadays it is theoretically possible that a lazy heir of industrious ancestors might be in a better position in the community than his own industry warranted. Formerly the inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his work', tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent

CHAPTER NINE

RELIGION III: THE PEOPLE OF MAYEL

i

I stated earlier that the Lepchas have two or perhaps three religions. [756]
 My reason for this statement is that the ritual connected with [771]
 harvesting and hunting, though performed by Mun, have a number [795]
 of features which do not occur elsewhere. It seems to me possible [241]
 that the worship of the people of Mayel, and perhaps of Pong rum [224]
 the god of hunters, is of a different origin to the other Mun cere-
 monies; unfortunately too little is known about the ritual of neigh-
 bouring tribes to enable profitable speculation to be made as to
 whether either or both ceremonies are relatively modern importa-
 tions from outside, or whether they are on the contrary the oldest
 Lepcha customs. The most outstanding differences with other Mun [562]
 ritual, and indeed with ordinary Lepcha life, is, first, a discrimination
 against women, secondly, an insistence on virginity for some of the
 celebrants, and thirdly a suggestion of the danger of menstruating
 women. Women may perform the sacrifice to the people of Mayel,
 but if they do so the ceremony is curtailed and fewer objects
 employed; they not only cannot sacrifice to Pong rum but must not
 even be aware when the sacrifice takes place; and the popped corn
 and *chi* which are employed in it, if not made by a man, which is
 preferable, must be made by a virgin girl. The chief offerings to [782]
 the people of Mayel are the *lafét* sacrifice and *sakyou faat*; the
 small bird for the *lafét* must be killed by a virgin boy, and the
 strained *chi* poured into the buttered cup by a virgin girl.

This insistence upon virginity is unparalleled in Lepcha life;¹ [241]
 785

¹ The only other instance is in the sacrifice to a pair of demons who cause a coughing disease (? tuberculosis) and whose presence and ritual were divined and by a Nandjému less than ten years ago. For this ceremony the popped corn must be made by a virgin girl, and the Mun must fast for twenty-four hours before the sacrifice. Only two people know how to perform this very modern importation.

24/784 living outside the closed community the prohibition is impossible to observe; the Lepchas of Zongu are well aware that there are good harvests where this prohibition is disregarded; but they consider that were *they* to neglect it their harvests would be bad as they live nearer the people of Mayel.

24/ The people who represent Mayel-mu and Talyeu-mu when reaping are not paid any special honours; they represent the gods but they are not considered to have anything divine about them during this representation. For other crops there are not any elaborate ceremonies. When buckwheat is ripe a little of it is offered in the householder's house to Konchen, with an offering of buckwheat *chi*. 'The people of Sandong make a buckwheat cake and offer it but we don't.' At the time of planting the wet rice a general ceremony is performed in which a chicken or a goat is offered and also a plate with *chimi*, etc., on it; 'terraced rice comes from Nepal so it isn't really necessary to give thanks, but here we live near Mayel and it is better to be careful.' When a field is cleared in the forest for the first time a chicken is offered for each member of the household and also a plate with *chimi*, etc., to keep away illness and predatory animals. This ceremony can be performed by anybody who knows how to do so.

iii

- 224/782 For the annual sacrifice to Moot *rum* Tseu, who is also called Pong *rum*, the popped corn and *chi*, if not prepared by a man, which is more desirable, must be prepared by a virgin girl. Pong *rum* together with his wife Shing *rum*, is the lord of all wild animals and the patron saint of hunters. Every year in October a joint sacrifice has to be made to him by all the hunters of the neighbourhood; the sacrifice consists of popped corn, *chi*, dried fish and bird, ginger, arum root, some other tuber, sugar cane, banana and worm-wood flowers. If possible all the prepared ingredients should be made by a man and no woman must witness the sacrifice or even know when it has been performed. Pong *rum*, it will be remembered, is the guardian of the road to Mayel.

In the forest as soon as an animal has been killed and cut up a sacrifice must be made to Pong *rum*. Big leaves are cut and put on the ground and then the animal is divided up and the head is put in the front with a foreleg and hind leg on either side and singed intestines in the middle. This is all 'offered' to Pong *rum*, and

RELIGION III: THE PEOPLE OF MAYEL 245

the hunter crouching behind and speaking very slowly and softly, gently throws the burnt intestines bit by bit over the animal's head. On his return to the village great care must be taken that no woman sees the animal's head; if she did the hunter would have no success in future. 224
782
[784]

To know how to sacrifice to Pong *rum* it is necessary to learn how to, and to receive *loong*; for this purpose the novice goes to anybody who knows—maybe his father or some other relation or a friend—taking with him *chi* and a ceremonial scarf and a rupee. Great care must be taken that no woman is present at this time. When the older man sees the gifts he enquires what they are for and is told it is to learn how to sacrifice. The older man then arranges the sacrifice and tells the neophyte to sit with his back to him: he must not look but must listen most attentively. After that the neophyte on the next suitable occasion will make the sacrifice; the instructor will be near him and if he makes a mistake will nudge him, whereat the sacrifice must be stopped short. Subsequently the neophyte will take another lesson, continuing until he is word perfect and has received his *loong* and can sacrifice on his own.

A person who has once been to the communal sacrifice to Pong *rum* should continue to do so all his life; he may, however, give it up, in which case he is liable to be troubled with poltergeist manifestations by Pong *rum*, who anyhow if he is displeased with a hunter will pursue him whistling, and the thump of heavy stones falling will be heard, though no stones are seen to fall. It is even preferable for hunters' children to continue the ritual.

Kurma used to hunt but does so no longer and has given up going to the sacrifice to Pong *rum*; for he is afraid that should he go and then not hunt he would become mad. As things are he is somewhat persecuted by Pong *rum*; he describes these persecutions with the greatest detail and indifference. He says quite freely that he does not care a bit.

Near his house is an orange tree and some time ago on a moonlight night he heard distinctly the sound of big stones being thrown under this tree; but there was nothing to be seen so he knew it was Pong *rum*; he therefore returned to the house, lit some incense leaves and butter and came out and offered it to the god saying 'Please forgive us; we have no intention of hunting'.

'Only a month ago when some friends were in my house with me drinking *chi* I heard my dog which was tethered some way

224 from the house barking furiously; I went outside expecting that
 782 somebody was passing but I could see no-one. When I returned to
 the house we heard the dog whimper and then stop; we went
 outside and found its dead body in front of the house. Of course
 Pong rum had killed it, but I do not care: I just offered the gods
 some incense.⁴

Kurma's younger brother used to hunt but never learnt how to
 make the sacrifice properly; Kurma used to do it for him. But on
 one occasion when he was away, his maternal uncle sacrificed and
 instead of making the offering to Pong rum made it to his own god.
 This is one of the reasons given for this young man's subsequent
 violent death in the forest.⁴

Kurma's family are now very unlucky hunters and the reason
 is as follows. Three generations ago their forefather was a very
 lucky hunter who worshipped Shing rum (the wife of Pong rum).
 At that time the Mandal of the village was an unlucky hunter;
 he worshipped Pong rum. Now these two agreed to change gods.
 To do this they killed an ox and then drank three cups of *chi* mixed
 with the blood, with dabs of butter on the side, for this constitutes
 the most binding path. From that day the descendants of the
 Mandal were always successful hunters while the descendants of the
 other man were always unlucky. Pong rum and Shing rum are
 naturally exclusively male gods.

Before drinking *chi* (in the case of lamas also before drinking
 tea) or eating food a little is offered to the gods. If the food is
 domestic in origin it is thrown away from the eater, if of wild
 origin towards the eater, that is backwards. These offerings are
 tiny and quite automatic; the 'straw' is lifted from the *chi* and
 flicked outwards; a few crumbs are dropped from the first handful.
 No form of prayer accompanies these offerings.

⁴ See Chapter Fifteen, pp. 402-403.

replied that since the woman had herself come and implored/59 him to sleep with her he did not feel in any way responsible. A village meeting was now held and the brother attended to give his own version of the story. He was, however, held to be the guilty party and ordered to pay for the ceremonies. When he went to the meeting he took with him one pig, a load of millet for making *chi*, and a large quantity of grain. These he intended to give as a peace offering. "It is true," he said, "that this girl and I have lived together": but more than this he would not say. The same evening, when they/59 were all sitting quietly at home, Karma saw his brother/762 climb up the ladder into the attic store-room, where the [224] poison used for hunting was kept. He stayed there some minutes and Karma heard him mumbling to himself about being found guilty, and saying that he could not possibly raise the means to pay. He tottered down the steps and into the yard, walked three steps forward and back again, and then made as if to fall. He appeared to be beside himself with rage, and was holding his unsheathed knife in his hand and shouting out that he would kill anyone who came near. His mother now rushed out and took him by the right hand and Karma clasped his left. With difficulty they threw him to the ground, for he had now become violent. Karma tried to force his brother's mouth open. He could see that his tongue was black and swollen, and his hands were tightly clenched. These, he knew, were the signs of poison. He shouted to his younger brother to run at once and bring some wild raspberry roots, also some chickens' excreta, this being/757 a well-known emetic. He quickly ground the two together and forced the mixture down his brother's throat. By this time, however, his body had started to stiffen and he died a few minutes later.

After he had been living at home for some time Karma fell/59 in love with a woman fourteen years his senior, the sister of a man named Gongyop. He had known this girl for some time, but had always considered himself too poor to marry. Since/59 she, however, was not at all anxious to leave her brother's/59

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

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291
159



On the left the oldest man in Lingtem, who claims to be over ninety, with Chötembu's wife.

[778]

The *Hlaribu*, or local artist-Lama. The objects on the left are small revolving prayer-drums.



224
273
415



The method of drinking *chai*. The special hat which the man is wearing is made of plaited bamboo, and is only worn when hunting. It is not often seen nowadays.

[facing p. 106]

231 animals that in adjacent Tibet are universally employed for transport. Such loads as have to be transported are carried entirely by men. For this purpose they do not, however, [482] often use the head-strap, the commonest method throughout the Eastern Himalayas, but carry their loads by means of a strap round their shoulders. It usually takes the form of a length of creeper, torn from a tree at the time.

* * * * *

[713] Lamas may not take any form of life, and men should not 231 eat the flesh of animals killed by women; but apart from 857 this there are no restrictions in the slaughtering of domestic animals. There is no ceremony when a child kills its first animal. A boy generally starts to kill chickens when he is about ten; goats and pigs four or five years later. It is thought, however, that a youth should not attempt to slaughter oxen before he is about twenty, and not before he is capable of copulating with a woman. "If he is unable to copulate," said Karma, "he would not dare to kill an ox; he would not be nearly strong enough, and it might easily turn on him. If, however, he is able to copulate then he is strong enough to be able to look after himself." I should add, however, that this is merely a manner of speaking, and that there is no significant connection between the two acts.

* * * * *

136 The dense forests of Jongu are well stocked with deer 224 (mostly the so-called Barking Deer—*Stylocerus ratna*) and pheasants, so that by means of hunting the people are able to vary and supplement their ordinary diet.

224 A boy usually starts to hunt at about the age of fifteen, 868 and for the first few times he will go out unarmed with some experienced man. Later on he will make or acquire a bow and arrows of his own; and if he cannot make them himself he will get someone else to give them to him. He will never, however, ask his own father for a bow and arrows, unless he too happens to be a hunter, because "hunting is merely

FAMILY LIFE

193

play; and a father will want his son to work in the fields." ²²⁴
[363]

When a man starts to hunt he must on no account eat any of the flesh of the first hundred animals he kills, unless by any chance he shoots them with a gun, in which case it does not matter. After killing a hundred animals the hunter will [826] find that he has acquired a slight hollow in his right shoulder-blade; and when this appears it is an indication that he need no longer observe this prohibition, the disregard of which is [753] thought to cause body sores and even leprosy. In the meantime the young hunter will hand his game over to friends and relations, who in return will give him chickens and eggs.

Pong Rum is the master of all animals, and for this reason [776] he is the patron saint of hunters. Once every year, generally in October, all hunters make a sacrifice to this god. Parched [782] rice, *chi*, fish, wild birds' flesh, ginger, arum, sugar-cane, banana, and some sticks of wormwood are offered to the god, and it is important that no woman should take any part in their preparation: nor, if possible, should she even know that they are being got ready, or the hunter will have no luck during the forthcoming year. There is no actual ceremony, the hunter merely taking all these articles and depositing them in some place in the forest where the god will see them.

In addition to this annual sacrifice, every time a hunter kills an animal or bird it is usual to singe its entrails and leave them as an offering to Pong Rum. Whenever a wild animal or bird is killed the god is always present and can be heard; he sounds like a stone whistling through the trees. As soon as this noise is heard the hunter will put the animal on the ground and offer it to the god, speaking very slowly and distinctly; but he leaves only the burned entrails behind. On his return home he should take care that no woman sees the animal's head, or it means that he will be unlucky next time he goes out hunting.

A man who goes in for hunting bears makes a kind of bamboo spring, which he fastens into a tree. If the bear treads on this it is at once precipitated into a pit below,

- 224 which is filled with pointed stakes. A bear-hunter must
 [834] refrain from all sexual intercourse for three months from
 the day the trap is placed in position, otherwise any bears
 caught in the pit would escape; but apart from this there
 is no correlation between hunting and sex, such as is common
 in many parts of the world. In this particular case the con-
 [832] nection may possibly be due to the fact that bears' gall-
 [757] bladders are believed to have some aphrodisiac quality; but
 [844] they are also said to be useful in curing pains at childbirth,
 and, mixed with hot water, as an antidote for malaria. They
 are also much used for curing the peculiar itching of the feet,
 which is said to be due to walking over excreta in the fields
 [435] during hot weather. They can be sold in Gangtok for about
 five rupees each. The flesh, however, is eaten and con-
 sidered to be rather a delicacy; but for some reason or other
 most "civilised" people consider it to be unfit for human
 consumption. I do not know why, for the bear is an excep-
 tionally clean eater and lives mostly on roots and other
 vegetable matter. I have on occasion tasted the meat myself;
 it is undoubtedly somewhat full-flavoured and rather tough,
 and tastes a little like steak that is past its prime; but apart
 from these minor disadvantages it is perfectly palatable, and
 no more offensive than beef or pork.

- 773 One day a man was wandering on the hillsides when he
 saw what he took to be the dead body of a bear. It was in
 reality a god; but the actual spirit had for the moment left
 the bear's body and was standing at a little distance looking
 on. The man cut up the carcass and ate a portion, when
 the god itself appeared. "You have eaten my body," it said;
 "and in return you must worship and serve me henceforth.
 From this day, however, I give you permission to eat all
 kinds of animal flesh, even unto the bodies of snakes." This
 [184] was how the Salong clan of the Lepcha tribe took to eating
 snakes; but they gave up the habit several generations ago,
 and it is said that there are now no snake-eaters in Jongu.

- 224 Once a man takes to hunting he must continue to make

the annual sacrifice to Pong Rum, even though he hunts no²²⁴ more. To neglect this duty would be to run the risk of being haunted by the god, who might cause one to drown oneself in the river. Karma no longer hunts, but when he gave it up he forgot all about the annual ceremony. One night, however, Pong Rum came and threw stones at an orange tree outside his house. It was a misty half-moonlight night and he could not see very clearly; but he could hear the stones come whizzing through the air. He went outside, lighted some incense, and put a little butter beside it. "Forgive me," he said to the Rum; "for I will hunt no more." He then went inside and lay down, thinking the god was satisfied.

About a month after this he was sitting quietly drinking one night when his dog suddenly started to bark. He went outside to investigate, but could see nothing; it was a wild, dark night. He went indoors again, but after a little while the dog again started to bark and then whined in a most peculiar way: Karma thought that perhaps someone had hit it. He went outside again; but again there was nothing to see. He walked all round the house, and then he suddenly noticed that his dog was lying dead; there were no marks on its body. It was the Pong Rum come again. Karma now does the annual ceremony regularly, and has not since been troubled.

Here is another hunting story. Some three generations²²⁴ ago there was once a Mandal and his friend. The Mandal's⁵³⁹ family guardian was a male god, that of his friend a female. The Mandal was exceedingly fond of hunting, but he never had any luck, whereas the other man never came home with an empty bag. The Mandal persuaded his friend to change gods with him, as he thought this might change his luck; to this his friend agreed. They sacrificed an ox, and placed it with some *chi*, butter, and grain. Then they each took their drinking bowls, smeared some butter round the rim, and made a libation to their respective gods, saying at the same time, "May my Rum be yours and yours mine." They did

- 224 this three times, very solemnly and in the form of an oath.
539 After this the Mandal's luck changed, but the other man never again killed an animal. This is a true story.

224 Before a hunter can make sacrifices to Pong Rum he must
869 first learn how. He takes a present of *chi* and rice to some experienced hunter and asks to be instructed: but he must take care that no woman knows what he is doing. The teacher will then make an offering to the god, at the same time telling it that in future the boy will make the sacrifice himself, and that he should therefore be pleased to accept it. The young hunter now sits with his back to the teacher, who goes through the sacrificial formula phrase by phrase. He does this very slowly, so that the boy may commit the words to memory. By sitting with his back to the teacher his mind is not distracted and he is thus able to concentrate better. As soon as he can repeat the words correctly he may make the sacrifice himself; but the next time he kills an animal he will do the sacrifice in the presence of his teacher. If he makes a mistake the teacher taps him gently on the shoulder, but he makes no comment. That particular sacrifice, however, is ineffective, and the boy must come again. He does this until he is word-perfect, but need take no further presents to his teacher.

411 The bow is the weapon most commonly used in Jongu,
824 both for hunting and for killing domestic cattle. It is made of bamboo and strung with toughened fibre made from the young shoots of a special kind of tree-fern. Arrows are made from the stems of the *Parong* (*Deeringia celosiodes*) and tipped with kites' feathers. The arrow-head, which is detachable and usually remains in the kill, is made from *Payung* wood (*Actinodaphne Sikkimensis*) and is smeared with aconite; but
[439 metal arrow-heads, imported from Gangtok, are nowa-
177] days replacing the home-made wooden variety. Domestic cattle are killed with unpoisoned arrows, fired at the heart from a distance of only a yard or two. The arrow-holder is merely a length of hollow bamboo fitted with a cap, and is slung over the shoulder with a length of cane. Cane,

Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

R. DE NEBESKY-WOJKOWITZ

Kalimpong, Bengal

- 224 Hunting, which formed only a century ago a substantial part of the economy of the Lepchas¹ — the aboriginal inhabitants of the Himalayan State of Sikkim — is at present gradually decreasing in importance, in proportion with the development of agriculture and the breeding of cattle. Many of the Lepcha men still pursue hunting occasionally, but more in the way of a useful pastime and only a few professional hunters can be found nowadays.

223 The animals hunted are birds — only those, which do not feed
224 on carrion and meat in general, being considered fit for consump-
262 tion — hares, deer, musk deer, stags, bear and wild pigs. Some of these animals are hunted not only for their meat but also in order to obtain some parts of the body which are valued as medicines, e. g. the bile and liver of a bear, the bones of certain birds, etc. — Crows, rats and mice who attack the crops, are killed as well, but not eaten. Occasionally, a leopard or man-eating tiger is trapped, but their meat is not touched. The hunting of elephants and rhinos which was rather popular at one time, judging from the numerous accounts still circulating among the Lepchas, does not seem to be practised anymore.

784 A religious prohibition which is, however, not always strictly kept,
177 exists against the killing, and especially the eating, of monkeys, who
224 frequently invade the fields and cause considerable damage. No other *tabu* seems to exist, except the prohibition of killing a white

784 elephant, a custom having its origin in the Buddhist religion, which
 177 began to spread among the Lepchas four centuries ago.² Otherwise,
 ● 224 all animals can be hunted at any time, except when having young.

411 The main weapon of a Lepcha hunter is the bow (*sā li*). It is
 [203] always made of bamboo, with a string (*sā li grīm*) made either of
 the same material or from a nettle plant, called *kū ju*; the best bow-
 strings, however, are manufactured from the fibres of the *kā fī* tree.
 The bamboo, which is used for making the bow, has to be carefully
 selected. It should be cut at the height of the dry season (December—
 January) from a bamboo growing at a high altitude and in an open
 spot, where its stem has been frequently bent by the wind. Before
 using the new bow, it has to be smoked for some time and also later,
 the bow as well as the arrows rest always on a bamboo platform
 (*pūn hróp*), which one finds in Lepcha houses suspended above the
 open hearth. The bow is kept released and is only spanned when
 it has to be used.

Arrows (*tsóng*) are made preferably of a reed (*mók tu*) or, less
 frequently, of bamboo. Normally three steering feathers (*tsóng ro*)
 — the feathers of a kite or duck being preferred — are set into cuts
 made previously in the reed and are afterwards glued and fastened
 with strings. A deep, square or oblong cut (*dem*) is made to receive
 the bow-string and, lastly, the portion of the reed holding the
 steering feathers is painted black. To some of the hunting arrows,
 however, no steering feathers are attached. The barbed arrow head
 (*tsóng thyak*) is made of iron; it possesses either a short conical metal
 tube, which receives the shaft or has a short iron rod, which is
 pushed into the shaft. In the latter case, the end of the shaft is then
 tightly bound with a string and impregnated with resin. Arrows
 used to scare away thieves, and the toy arrows of children, do not
 possess iron points but carry instead a short bamboo tube on the
 front of the shaft, to render the missile harmless.

411 Sometimes poisoned arrows are used for hunting and formerly also
 278 for warfare. The poison most frequently applied for this purpose
 224 is aconite (*pā kī*). An aconite root is kept ready by the hunter and

R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz: Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

the poison is prepared only shortly before the hunt begins. The root 41
is ground between two stones and then some water is added to form 278
a thick paste. Lepcha hunters are very careful in handling aconite 224
and should their hands show even a small cut caused during house
or field work, they will refrain from using the poison on this day.
Should an animal be killed by a poisoned missile, the hunter will wait
until the body of the prey has grown cold — »the poison returns
then from the heart to the wound» — and afterwards that part of
the body, which had been wounded is cut off and thrown away.

Hunting weapons

Four different kinds of bow are used by the Lepchas:

1. The hunting bow in the average 140 cms long. This type of
bow was also used in warfare.
2. A bow, in the average 180 cms long, used in marksmanship.
The central part of the bow's shaft (*pyäng shing*) is usually
strengthened by a piece of bamboo, cut in a typical Lepcha
design and fastened to the rod of the bow by resin and strings.
The arrows, used for this bow, have a simple, conical iron point
without barbs.
3. *Da bryó sã lí*, pellet bow, in the average 150 cms long, used for
killing birds. The centre of the bow's rod is usually strengthened
by a piece of bamboo. Four small, flat slivers of bamboo are
bound together in the middle of the bow-string to form a
small square, upon which a clay-ball (*da bryó*) can be placed.
This central piece of the bow-string is called *sã lí bryeng*.
The bow-string is fastened to the shaft of the bow in such a
way, that it remains slightly turned to the right, allowing the
missile to fly past the bow and the hand which holds it. —
The clay-balls, used for the *da bryó sã lí* are usually burned to
make them harder. The pellet bow can be seen very frequently
in use during harvest time, when the fields have to be guarded
against birds.

- 411 4. A small cross-bow is employed by the Lepchas in an automatic trap, which will be described later.

The bow is carried over the shoulder or in the hand, while a simple bamboo tube, which can be closed with a lid of the same material, serves as a quiver (*sā lu*).

It is customary among the Lepchas to handle the bow and arrow in the following way: The left hand grasps the rod of the bow in its centre and the upstretched thumb presses the shaft of the arrow gently against the bow. The first finger and the middle finger of the right hand together pull the bow-string, the stump end of the arrow resting between these two fingers. — To prevent injury from the released bow-string, the left armwrist is usually protected by a piece of leather, a woven bamboo bracelet (*tūk bya*) or by a ring, made of a cow's horn.

- 411 Occasionally Lepcha hunters use a spear (*sūng blyo*); its barbed
224 iron head has in the average a length of 35 cms. The spear is mostly used when hunting bear or wild pig. Some Lepcha hunters even claim, that a poisoned spear can be used successfully for killing a rhino, which is said to have one weak spot in its back where a mortal wound can be inflicted.

- 224 Stories circulating among the Lepchas narrate that formerly pointed and poisoned wooden logs were used for killing elephants. After finding a passage in the jungle frequented by elephants — mostly near a place where elephants would come to drink — several hunters climbed on some high trees on both sides of the passage, suspending the log with the help of ropes above the trail. When an elephant passed below, the log was released at a favourable moment to wound the animal in the neck. The prey was then simultaneously attacked by other hunters with poisoned spears.

Traps

A great variety of traps are used by the Lepchas and only the most frequent types should be mentioned here.

R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz: Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

For catching jungle fowl, hares and other small game, a spring bow (*ver sak*) is set in the following way. A short piece of wood, with a broad notch in its upper part, is stuck firmly into the ground and then another piece of wood, which has a notch loosely fitting into that of the first piece, is placed into it in a horizontal position. A bamboo shoot or a small tree is bent, a string attached to it and, lastly, a sling is made, which is led over the upper, horizontal arm of the previously described device. The bait is placed on the sling and by pulling at it, the horizontal arm slips out of the vertical piece and thus releases the trap. — The same kind of trap, only in a larger size, is used for catching deer.

Another kind of sling trap used for catching jungle fowl is the so-called *ma lô*. It consists of a row of slings, made of the hair of a horse-tail, which are suspended from a fixed horizontal beam.

A Lepcha dead-fall (*kóp*) for killing jungle fowl, is constructed as follows: A string is fastened to a tree and then led over a flat stone; the string ends in a short bamboo stick, to which a bait is fastened. Then another short string is bent into a loop and its two ends are firmly fastened to the ground at the bottom of the stone and the bamboo stick with the bait is then pulled through the loop, formed by the lower string, the tension of both strings holding the stone in a tilted position. A slight movement of the bamboo piece causes the upper sling to slip out of the loop and the stone thus drops on top of the animal.

Another kind of dead-fall, which has to be set on a jungle path, is the so-called *shil*. It consists of a heavy wooden beam, supported on one side by a lightly placed stick, which might be easily knocked down by an animal running along the path.

For catching birds, a small grill is made out of a few bamboo sticks, and is afterwards smeared with carry birdlime (*a' yók*), obtained from a *Ficus* tree. The birdlime is usually kept ready for use in a small bamboo container (*po tek*). The grill, already smeared with bird lime, is known as *a' yók pün grim*; it is placed over

223 troughs, filled with water, over springs, where birds come to drink or on the tops of trees.

- 224 An automatic spear trap (*sa lak*) is used for killing deer and sometimes a number of such traps are set, should a man-eating tiger roam around a settlement. In this case, people are warned to stay in the houses until the hunters have removed the traps again. The spear-traps are set with great care and at a certain height, the hunter calculating the size of the tiger from its footprints. The spear-trap is made as follows: A huge bamboo tube is cut lengthwise and firmly fixed at a certain height and position with the help of several bamboo supports. Then a long piece of bamboo is fastened horizontally above the ground — at the same height of the bamboo tube — and bent strongly backwards until one end of it reaches the bamboo tube, where it is then held in its spanned position by means of a simple cock. A string is fastened to the latter and stretched low across the jungle path. At last a strong piece of bamboo, the front-end of which has been cut to a sharp point and usually poisoned, is placed in the tube as a missile. — Usually another string, also connected with the cock, is spanned breast high and further away in the direction from which a man might approach. If somebody then stumbles unaware into the trap, the missile is released beforehand without causing harm.

A small cross-bow trap (*sā lak tyāk*) is used for killing rats. It consists of a miniature cross-bow which aims into a bamboo tube, closed at its further end. The bow-string is cocked over one end of a movable bamboo stick, the other end of it, to which some bait is attached, reaching into the bamboo tube. By a slight pull at the bait, the stick, which holds back the bow-string, is moved and the arrow thus released. — It may be mentioned in this connection that poisoned food is also often laid out for killing rats, mice and other animals, who harm the crops.

- 225 Jungle fowl is sometimes caught with the help of a tent-like net.
- 226 Its top is loosely hung up on a branch and its sides are fastened to the ground. On one side only, an entrance is left by lifting the flap.

de Nebesky-Wojkowitz: Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

the net and supporting it with a stick. Some corn is placed as²²³
it on the ground inside the net and the hunter then hides himself²²⁶
a nearby bush. Should some fowl enter the net, the hunter hits
the stick supporting the flap with a stone, thus closing the trap, or
simply begins to shout; the fowl flies up, the net is detached from
the branch and falls on top of the prey.

While most of the before-mentioned traps can be easily handled²²⁴ ●
by a single man, in some cases, especially in big game hunt, the
operation of several hunters is necessary. Huge camouflaged pit-
falls (*tũng bõng*), mostly with sharp spikes at the bottom — made
of a small, but very hard kind of bamboo (*po yõng tsu*) — were^[224]
constructed for trapping elephants and rhinos. For catching the
rhino, a spot in the jungle had to be located first, where a rhino
would habitually come to answer its call of nature. Lepcha hunters
aim that the rhino then usually begins to walk backwards and
easily falls into a pit.

To catch leopards or tigers alive, a heavy cage with a trap door
was constructed; in this case, a living bait was used. Small cages
with trap doors are sometimes placed in the fields, to catch monkeys
who cause damage to the crops.

The hunting of wild pigs is often carried out by a group of
hunters. At first, rows of huge bamboo spikes are erected under a
cliff and a number of men, forming a beating line, try to chase the
wild pigs towards the cliff, from where they eventually drop on the
spikes set below.

Occasionally beating lines are formed to drive animals towards a
line of archers. In the driving hunt, fire is never used as the Lepchas
fear that a fire in the jungle might get easily out of control and
become a danger to men and their property.

Fishing

A few among the Lepchas, mostly those whose dwellings lie close²²⁶
to a mountain river, practise fishing, but as in hunting, fishing also

APRIL, 1848.

LEPCHAR, CUSTOMS AND MARRIAGES.

133

~~Some~~[†] are supposed to be antidotes against poison, and hence fetch an enormous price; they are of a peculiar wood, rarer and paler-coloured. I have paid a guinea for one such, hardly different from the common sort, which cost but 4*d.* or 6*d.* MM. Huc and Gabet graphically allude to this circumstance, when wishing to purchase cups at Lhassa, where their price is higher, as they are all imported from the Himalaya. The knots from which they are formed, are produced on the roots of oaks, maples, and other mountain forest trees, by a parasitical plant, known to botanists as *Balanophora*.

Their intoxicating drink, which seems more to excite than to debauch the mind, is partially fermented Murwa grain (*Eleusine Coracana*). Spirits are rather too strong to be relished raw, and when a glass of wine is given to one of a party, he sips it, and hands it round to all the rest. A long bamboo flute, with four or six burnt holes far below the mouth-hole, is the only musical instrument I have seen in use among them. When travelling, and the fatigues of the day are over, the Lepchas will sit for hours chatting, telling stories, singing in a monotonous tone, or blowing this flute. I have often listened with real pleasure to the simple music of this rude instrument; its low and sweet tones are singularly Æolian, as are the airs usually played, which fall by octaves: it seems to harmonize with the solitude of their primæval forests, and he must have a dull ear who cannot draw from it the indication of a contented mind, whether he may relish its soft musical notes or not. Though always equipped for the chase, I fancy the Lepcha is no great sportsman; there is little to be pursued in this region, and he is not driven by necessity to follow what there is.

Their marriages are contracted in childhood, and the wife purchased by money, or by service rendered to the

† [i.e., wooden cups. - Analyst]

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF NEPAL

47

opinion that Rum has no wife. But other names used for the Supreme God are expressive of the belief that he had a wife. Han-bu-ni Mun said, "Sa-dzug-rum has a wife by the name of Gor-song-mu." Sa-liang, son of the Bong-thing Ong-di, contradicts this statement, "Sa-dzug-rum has no wife, but he has four help-mates. These are the four spirits who cause disquiet and unrest in the world. They have to be appeased by sacrifices which we perform twice a year. Sa-dzug-rum is not the god of creation, which took place through another god."

Stocks writes, "It appears that there were five original deities: It-mo and her husband Pa-sandi, their children, Nazong-gnyu and Takbo-thing and Tashe-thing, the son of the former. In these creative power is attributed to the female deities, It-mo and Nazong-gnyu (note 1). The latter (Pasandi) is only mentioned once, and as apparently there is much confusion between the functions of him and of his son, Takbo-thing, it would be difficult to establish his real nature." The same confusion exists between Ta-she-thing and Tak-bo-thing. We may note however that a female deity, contrary to the belief of Goror, is never regarded as a Supreme Being. Goror considers It-bo-mo to be female,³³ but we have seen that It-bo or Ayit-bo means the god of creation. The Dän-si Bong-thing from Ka-sär says, "In the beginning there was only the God, RUM. He had no special name. The demons Mung were non-existent at the time. Then came the first pair of deities, Agek-rum and Alat-rum, the god and goddess of procreation. Then too, there existed Ta-she-thing and Tak-bo-thing. There was besides, It-bo and his wife De-bo. It-bo was the god of creation who created the first man, Ti-gung-tik." We did not come across the concept of a goddess as the Highest Being in all the Lepcha mythology, but we found certain very definite evidences of the belief that the Supreme God has a wife (cf. genealogy of God p. 60).

Another important god is Pum-rum, the god of the hunters. He is also called, among other names, Dju-thing or Pong-rum. Dju-thing is honoured as a threefold being. In the highest

³³ op. cit. p. 227.

³⁴ op. cit. p. 228.

776 mountain regions he is called Mo-nom-dju, for it is he who leads
 724 the chamois and the wild sheep, Mo-nom, to the hunters.
 In the lower hills he is called Se-go-bu-log-dju and delivers
 up stag, bears and other game. In the lower plains he is
 called Se-wing-dju, or the one who helps capture the game
 of the plains. Gom-shi and Gom-yu-rum are hunting gods
 and it is they who instil in the hunters the passion for hunting.
 The god of the hunters is worshipped exclusively by the men
 and the women do not in any way participate in the worship.
 We shall consider the details of this sacrifice at a later stage.

[573] The Rong claim that "Rum-zong-pa-no gave them bows,
 226] arrows and knives and taught them how to shoot fish."

776 The wife of Rum-zong-pa-no is Na-li-pun-di who in-
 [773] structed the women in the arts of farming, weaving and taught
 them housework and the use of the sickle. Sa-dju is another
 god venerated as god of agriculture. If a housewife who
 [581] is possessed by Sa-dju dies, the spirit continues to possess one
 of her daughters even though the daughter may have in the
 meanwhile left the family through marriage. This deity
 appears to the women in dreams in the guise of an old man.
 [587] If the apparition has a large goitre it augurs well for a rich
 harvest. If on the other hand it has no goitre at all it omens
 a bad harvest.

782 We already know from myths related earlier, that the
 776 Lepchas were given the first seeds by higher beings. These
 seeds were gaguni, which has the appearance of a millet-like
 maize; sama, a kind of white millet; goya, dry rice, and
 mokai, red maize. The dog plays an important role in the
 obtaining of rice and hence the Rong give, each time, some
 [231] portion of the rice they eat to the dog. We have noticed how,
 after a meal of rice, the remnants are scattered on the floor,
 and the dogs, which otherwise are not allowed inside the house,
 came in and ate the rice. The sacrifice to the god of agriculture
 is usually offered by the housewife. Nevertheless the man
 can offer the sacrifice if for some grave reason the woman is
 unable to do so. Man is not altogether excluded from the
 performance of the sacrifice, as is the case with the women in
 the sacrifice to the god of the hunters.

776 The family or household god is Rum-fat, who is the
 protector of domestic animals. The two gods of procreation,

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF SIKKIM

73

sacrifice is called Rum-fat or Lyang-rum-fat. It is performed once a year in honour of Rum or Pum-thing-rum somewhere in December or January. The flesh of the little birds can be dispensed with at this sacrifice, but the rice and Chi are essential. Generally it is the master of the house who is also the family priest who performs the sacrifice, but it can be performed by anyone who understands the rites.⁷⁹⁶
782

Sam-sing from Maria-Basti has described to us the hunter's sacrifice in the following terms: "The Supreme God whom we honour originally was called Assal. We do not know any more where he lives, and so each tribe honours its own god of the hunters. In the Yok-song-mo tribe to which I belong we practise the cult of the Mut. For this we keep cocks. Whenever we go out a-hunting we take a cock and present it to the god of the hunters. After the hunt the cock is killed and sacrificed to the god, and its flesh is consumed by us.⁷⁹⁶
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A part of the game killed at every hunt has to be offered to Mut. We cut little pieces from each part of the body of the animal wrap them up in leaves and offer them up to the god. After the sacrifice has been offered we eat the meat ourselves. No woman is ever allowed to be present at the sacrifice to Mut.^[784] Another member of the Rong tribe called this god of the hunters by the name of Dju-thing. He honours him in the manner described above. He also stressed the fact that a woman is never allowed to take part in, nor even to look on, this sacrifice to the hunting god.^[776]

Gorer describes a sacrifice which all hunters offer together in the month of October, viz. the sacrifice to Mut-rum-Tseu or Pong-rum, the protector of wild animals and patron of hunters. The wife of this god is called Shing-rum. The sacrifice consists of roasted corn, chi, dried fish and birds, ginger, arum roots and a few other tubers, sugar-cane, banana, and worm-wood flowers. No woman is allowed to know what is being prepared. She is not allowed to come near. The presence of a woman who is having her menstrual period is regarded as particularly dangerous. Chi must be prepared by a virgin or she should at least pour it into a vessel. The birds must be procured by a chaste youth. If a deer has^[784]
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[784]

been killed, then it is imperative that a sacrifice to the hunting god must be performed. The animal is already carved up in the forest. To quote Gorer: "Big leaves are cut and put on the ground and then the animal is divided up and the head is put in front with a foreleg and third leg on either side and singed intestines in the middle. This is all offered to Pong-rum, and the hunter crouching behind and speaking very softly and slowly, gently throws the burnt intestines bit by bit over the animal's head. On his return to the village great care must be taken to see that no woman sees the animal's head; if she does, the hunter will have no success in future."⁶⁴

The sacrifice of the hunters are a replica of the primitive sacrificial ceremonies. There is, however, a new element which comes to the forefront in the present sacrifices, *viz.* the strict exclusion of all women;—the women may not even be spectators, or even so much as see the head of the animal which has been killed and which is to serve as a victim at the sacrifice. The virginity of the youth and the maiden who prepare the sacrificial materials, is strongly emphasised. Such hunting sacrifices are well known among many primitive tribes in India, *e.g.* among the Irulas, Kurumbas, etc.

411

773

The Rong believe that the bow and arrow which they require for hunting are given to them by the deity, and that even the game is, so to say, given over to them by the deity. This enables us to get a better idea of the sacrifice to the god of the hunters. One of the legends recorded by Stocks runs as follows, "Once upon a time Tashey-thing made friends with Mon-tsu-mot, a wild she-boar whom he married and with whom he lived happily for ten years. Not far away from their home was a great rock hanging over a precipice where a rock bee (vot) had its hive, and Tashey-thing wished to bring the honey home one day himself. It was a very dangerous task to reach the rock even with the aid of a rope; and Tashey-thing, being helped by many animals and insects, made them all swear to hold the rope firmly and not to let it go. But his wife Mon-tsu-mot was not faithful, and wished to get rid of Tashey-thing.

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF SIKKIM

77

In another legend it is told how the bear was given to the Rong as game to be hunted. "One day the ancestor of the ⁷⁷³ was going through the forest when he came on what he thought was a dead bear ; but really this bear was an incarnation of Pong rum, the king of all animals and patron god of hunters who was at the moment taking a rest outside his incarnate body. The ancestor cut up the animal and ate part of it ; whereupon Pong rum appeared to him and said, 'You have eaten part of my body ; henceforward you and your children must serve me and worship me and make offerings to me. Henceforward also you and your children may eat all animals, even snakes, with impunity.' This is the reason why the people of Pantoong could eat and enjoy snakes, [262] whereas the rest of us would die if we ate them." ⁷⁷⁶ From these legends it appears clearly that the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing, gave to the Rong folk wild boar, bear, fish and honey as food and taught them to use bow and arrows, to shoot the game, and to catch fish with the net.

It has already been mentioned above that Pong rum, the god of the hunters, goes by different names depending on whether he drives towards the hunters, the game from the slopes of the highest mountains, or from the foot of the mountains or the plains. It appears also that these animals are looked upon as manifestations of the deity. The following story, related to us by the son of the A-chi Bong-thing who hails from a famous hunting family, lends support to this theory. "We were hunting in the thick virgin forests at the foot of the mountains at the beginning of the plains. Suddenly I came across an enormous bull with mighty horns. The bull was asleep ; yet, the sight of this gigantic animal so terrified me that I staggered, as one drunk, to the ground and felt as if my soul had left my body. That could only be the hunting god and it was useless to shoot, as he was proof against wounds. The bull awoke, stood erect, and with a thunderous bellowing drove the cows and calves further into the forest. We withdrew as quickly as we could and fled for safety." The hunters call the Mithan Sa-dzug-big in the Lepcha language. They say that he usually lives in the higher mountains as far as the

224 Tibetan frontier, but in the winter he descends into the plains.
 136 He is very difficult to hunt because he is the largest of cattle, bigger even than the Tibetan Yak, which they name Yok (clearly a rendering of the Tibetan name). They have never seen a wild yak, and so are unable to compare its size. Unfortunately for me I did not succeed in seeing a Sa-dzug-big, but I obtained sufficient information to establish the difference between the Mithan, Gaur, Gayal—a question which is very confused.

136 Great confusion is caused by the change and interchange of names. In North India we find the wild cattle called the Gaur. The Gaur (*Bos gaurus*) is an enormous animal which sometimes attains a height of 21 hands. The upper part of its neck is cylinder-shaped. The forehead is deeply concave. There is no dewlap. The horns are regularly poised and bend inwards at the end. But the sharpest curve is not at the end. The colour of the adult animal, especially the old bull, is deep brown, practically black. The Gaur has been erroneously called the bison. The very same description given by us above was given also in the case of the Mithan. The Gaur only inhabits the mountains and hilly countries and cannot be tamed. The Mithan is also a mountain animal and is very difficult to handle in captivity. The inhabitants of 136 Sikkim say that the Mithan cannot be tamed, but that the 231 wild bulls do mate with the domesticated cows. The mixed 825 offspring are then tamed. In the second and later generations there is a very marked difference from the wild ancestry. The greatest height is only 17 hands and the dewlap is developed. The horns are no longer regularly poised, nor are they curved inwards;—the greatest distance between the horns being now at the points. Even the colour is no longer identical.

Let us now explain why a confusion prevails over the names. The wild cattle in the Himalayas are called Mithan in Nepalese, and Sa-dzug-big in the Lepcha language. The natives say that the wild bulls cannot be tamed, but that they do mate with the domesticated cows. This intermixed breed is called Paluwa-Mithan in Nepalese, and Pamen in Lepcha. The ordinary cattle are called Siri-gay in Nepalese and Niu-big in Lepcha. The cross between these animals and the very

136 Gaval and Arna are the Hindi names for the water-
 [77] buffalo. In Bombay State, as far as the Central Provinces
 the name Ran bhainsa, water buffalo, is used for Gaur. In
 Mahrathi, it is pronounced gavya; in Tamil, katuerimai;
 in Malayalam, karthu; in Kanarese, kar-kona.⁶⁹

[231] The wild Gaur and the Mithan cannot be tamed. The
 [232] Gayal, which is wrongly called the Mithan, has no wild
 ancestor, but is only a cross between the wild bull and the
 domesticated cow. A clear proof of the mongrel character-
 istics of the Gayal is this: In districts where the Gaur are
 numerous and therefore more frequently mate with the domes-
 tic cows, the Gayal shows some resemblance to the Gaur,
 —the massive build with high backbone, etc. Through the
 constant adding of wild blood this characteristic is preserved,
 e.g. in the upper mountains of Assam. In districts where the
 Gaur are rare as for instance in the Chin hills, the build of the
 mongrel is smaller, the ridge at the back disappears, the
 dewlap grows larger and the horns more like those of the cows.
 By the fourth generation the maternal component of the or-
 dinary cattle is again quite dominant.⁷⁰ In these circumstances
 one should no longer look for the wild ancestors of the Gayal.

224 There is also a species of animals which the Rong do not
 262 kill, viz. the wild dog which is reddish in colour. Nor are
 825 they allowed to eat the flesh of tame dogs and horses. In this
 respect they are on par with the Tibetans.

776 There are legends pertaining to other curious creatures
 which are supposed to live in the thick virgin forests. Bön-
 mán-che is the Nepalese name; a "Wild man" who is said
 to be about as large as a great monkey. The Lepcha name
 for this creature is Sog-pa. Another being is the Bön-sacri,
 the "Wild magician." This creature is believed to kidnap
 the children of men and lead them away into the depths of the
 forest, where it instructs them in the arts of magic and makes
 them so accustomed to the wild forest life that they shun the
 company of men. The wives of the Bön-sacri are the Lidini,
 the "Wild wives." The Rong hunter must be proof against
 [782] the attacks of all these beings, and so he pays tribute to and

69. S. H. Prater, *Indian Animals*, Bombay, p. 204.

70. S. H. Prater, *op. cit.* p. 201 sq.

200
 224 them incredible. Some of the Rong are passionate hunters and spend months away from home on their expeditions. They send the game to their families through others. These
 [77] hunters venerate certain deities, Gom-shi-rum and Gom-yu-rum, who inspire them with this passion for hunting. The
 [25] Rong hunter is intimately acquainted with the ways of the wild; he knows every track, and can judge the time when the animal passed that way. He sets out in their tracks and pursues them tirelessly until he sights his quarry. Some of these hunters have won legendary fame. They told us of the father of A-chi Bong-thing, that he fearlessly pursued tigers and elephants. The very look in his eyes was so hypnotic that the animals, filled with frenzied fear, fled away from his glance as much as from his arrow.

411 The Lepcha makes his bow from the Ma-li-lang bamboo. The larger bows are about 1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ meter long, and the shorter ones about 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ meter. The section of the bow shaft is $\frac{1}{3}$ of a circle. The flat side of the shaft is inwards and the concave side outward. One end of the bow consists of a double knob separated by a notch which holds the string fastening. The other end has a notched pin in which the string can be easily fixed or removed. The string is made from Dzu-ya bamboo. At the ends are little ridges round which hemp threads are bound in order to fasten the string to the ends of the bow.

The arrow, which is about 50 cms. in length, is made from Po-rang bamboo. At the end is a notch which fits into the string. At the top of the shaft a fish tailed arrow head is let in. The quiver is made from the Bug-wood which grows in the plains. A bamboo loop fastened in the middle facilitates the carrying of the quiver. Another type of bow is used for shooting birds. It is smaller and the construction is slightly different. The bow shaft has a ridge of bamboo in the middle of the inner section of the shaft. The string is stretched into a little network in the middle which holds the pellets. The birds are shot with little taws of clay. (Fig. 22-24).

[text continues on p. 100]

41 Another weapon commonly used by the Rong is the knife Bakob. It has a straight blade and a gradually narrowing wooden hilt.

112 The Rong tribesman, in striking contrast to the other peoples, always carries his knife on his right hip while the others carry the Nepalese Kukuri on the left hip. The knife is the instrument most commonly used by the Lepchas. It serves to cut down trees, to divide the game and for countless other purposes.

224 That, in brief, is the equipment of the Lepcha hunters and their temperament. We have already seen how all this is linked with religion, viz. by the performance of sacrifices and the description of the hunt-deities. The Rong, or at least a part of them, have been, without doubt, originally, purely hunters. This belief is confirmed by Gorer, "According to Kahlyeu, (and the tradition is supported by others) until the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Lepcha were entirely nomadic, only building temporary huts and travelling about the forests, living on such animals they could kill, and wild plants of which the Lepcha have considerable knowledge, for they know the edible (but not, as European tradition believes, the medicinal) properties of nearly every plant and tree. Iron for knives, Kahlyeu says, was introduced in the time of his father's grandfather, that is to say, the first half of the eighteenth century. About a generation later the Lepcha started living in permanent houses and were able to hold or increase their stock of domestic animals. Private property in the land must have developed somewhat later."¹⁰⁸

241 Besides being hunters the Rong are also farmers. According to their legends they obtained their first seeds of dry rice, millet, maize and gurkins from their ancestral spirits in Mayal. They came as hunters to the land of their ancestors and were asked whether they possessed any grains for food. As they replied in the negative, they were given grain with instruction about its cultivation. At first, rice was used only for sacrificial purposes. They could only test whether the rice was ready by biting it with their teeth, and when they did so they found that the rice was sweet, and henceforward they began to eat rice as a food.

rice as a food. The fact that the offering of sacrifices to the ²⁴¹ deities concerned with farming was preponderantly a woman's concern, leads us to conclude that farming was originally ^[74] the work of the women. In the olden days the fields were burnt out in order to prepare them for the plantation. Part of the forest was burnt, cleaned up, and the cultivation of grain would be carried on for one or two years, after which the tribesmen would move away to another area. This is known as shifting cultivation. Today, the burning of fields is controlled by government, lest too much damage be done ^[636] to the forests. The permanent field system is the common practice today. (Fig. 25-27)

The Rong originally dug up their fields with the use of the hoe, and they did not use the plough. They have taken ^[177] over the plough only recently from the Indians and the Nepalese. The Lepcha's knowledge of farming was very elementary and they could by no means compete with the Indian and Nepalese farmers. There was a reason behind this. The Lepchas were not totally dependent for their existence on ^[222] farming, for the collection of roots and plants, and hunting, ^[224] offered them rich sources of nourishment. A little cattle-breeding goes hand in hand with farming. They keep a ²³¹ few cattle and goats; sheep are kept very seldom, and at the most one or two pigs. The cattle are the mountain Zebu. The humps of these animals are feebly developed, but for the rest they are strong animals. The Zebu are generally of a black colour. The goats are of a poor variety and have no special breed. The pig, which is different in shape from the black Chinese pig, has as its forbear the black Himalayan boar. The stomach of the pig does not hang down low; it has small erect ears, a strong mane of bristles, and a long and pointed head. A Lepcha who is well off keeps about eight to ^[311] ten cattle, and among these are two pairs of oxen for cultivation. The other animals are milk cows and calves. The milk ^[234] provided by these animals is used mainly for tea; but occasionally butter is made from it. The number of goats reared ^[252] is also not very large—ranging from ten to fifteen among the richer folk. The cattle and goats are driven to the grassy ^[312] slopes for grazing throughout the day and in the evening they return to their stalls. (Fig. 28)

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954

AK5 Lepcha AK5

VIII

142
291
302



19. Lepcha grandmother with grandchildren

142
411
137
224



Fig. 20-21
see p. 61-62

22. Lepcha hunter

[End Plate 2]

[End Plates 1-7 not processed]